
HAND SOLDERING TUTORIAL FOR FINE PITCH QFP DEVICES

Scope

This document is intended to help designers create their initial prototype systems using Silicon Lab's TQFP and LQFP devices where surface mount assembly equipment is not readily available. This application note assumes that the reader has at least basic hand soldering skills for through-hole soldering. The example presented will be the removal, cleanup and replacement of a TQFP with 48 leads and 0.5 mm lead pitch.

Safety

Work should be done in a well-ventilated area. Prolonged exposure to solder fumes and solvents can be hazardous. There should be no presence of sparks or flames when solvents are in use.

Materials

The right materials are key to a good solder job. The list below are the recommendations from Silicon Labs. Other materials may work, so the user should feel free to substitute and experiment. The use of organic solder is highly recommended.

Required

1. Wire wrap wire (30 gauge) *
2. Wire strippers for wire wrap wire *
3. Soldering station - variable temperature, ESD-safe. Should support temperatures 800°F (425°C). This example uses a Weller model EC1201A. The soldering wand should have a fine tip no more than 1 mm wide.
4. Solder - 10/18 organic core; 0.2" (0.5 mm) diameter

5. Solder flux - liquid type in dispenser
6. Solder wick - size C 0.075" (1.9 mm)
7. Magnifier - 4X minimum. An inexpensive headset OptiVISOR by Donegan Optical Co. is used for this example.
8. ESD mat or tabletop and ESD wrist strap - both grounded
9. Tweezers with pointed (not flat) tips
10. Isopropyl Alcohol
11. Small stiff bristle brush for cleaning (nylon or other non-metallic material). Cut off hair to approximately 0.25" (6 mm)

* Required for device removal only.

Optional

1. Board vise to hold printed circuit board
2. Dental pick (90 degree bend)
3. Compressed dry air or nitrogen to dry boards

4. Optical inspection stereo microscope 30-40X

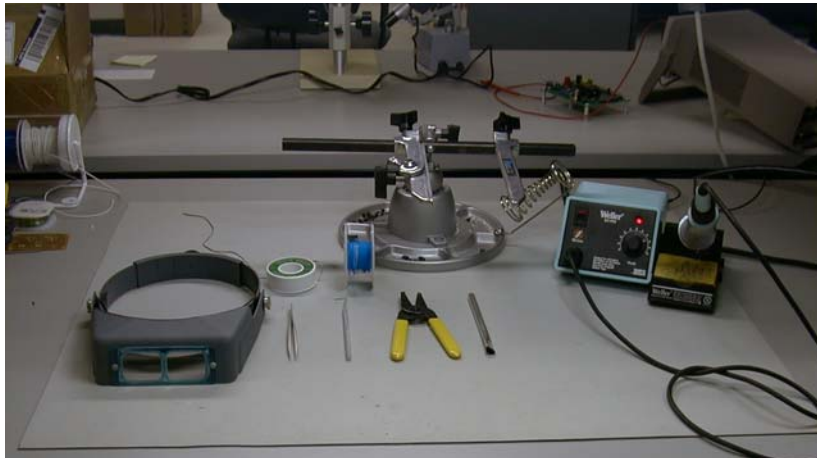


Figure 1. Some of the materials to get started...



Figure 2. clock-wise from left: 4X magnifying headset, solder wick, wire wrap wire, stiff cleaning brush, wire strippers, and pointed tweezers



Figure 3. Solder wick and wire wrap wire



Figure 3. Isopropyl Alcohol



**Figure 4. ESD safe soldering station with fine tip wand.
This one is Weller model EC1201A**



Figure 5. Optional equipment includes a PCB vise and an inspection microscope 7-40X

Procedure

The following procedures cover the replacement of a TQFP 48 pin device with 0.5 mm lead pitch. The lead shape is the standard gullwing associated with JEDEC standard QFPs. This procedure section is divided into three parts:

A. Part Removal

B. Board Cleanup

C. Soldering a new device.

If you are soldering parts to a new printed circuit board, skip part A and refer to the new board cleanup section in part B.

A. Part Removal

Preparation:

- Board with IC to be removed is mounted in a holder or vise. A PCB holder/vise is optional but it is required that the PCB is held steady for the part removal.
- The soldering station is warmed up to 800°F (422°C) and the solder tip is clean.
- ESD precautions have been taken.

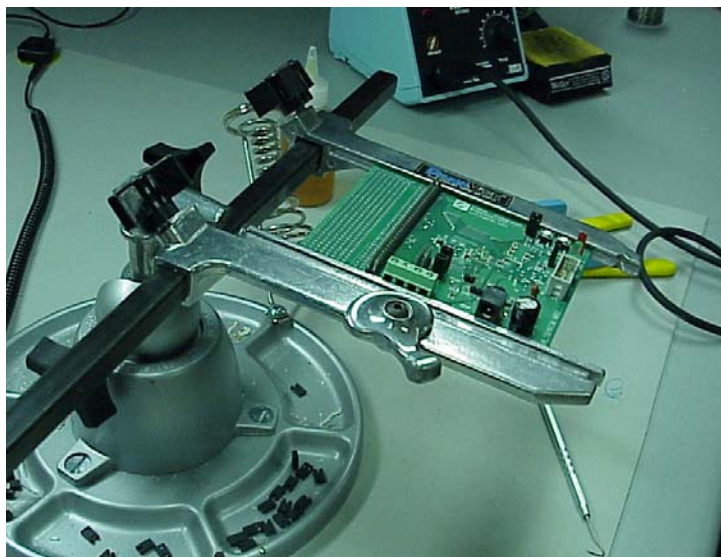


Figure 6. Ready to get started

Begin by wetting all the leads with flux to enhance the initial solder wicking cleanup. Wick up solder as much as possible from the QFP leads. Be careful not to scorch the PCB board with prolonged solder heat.

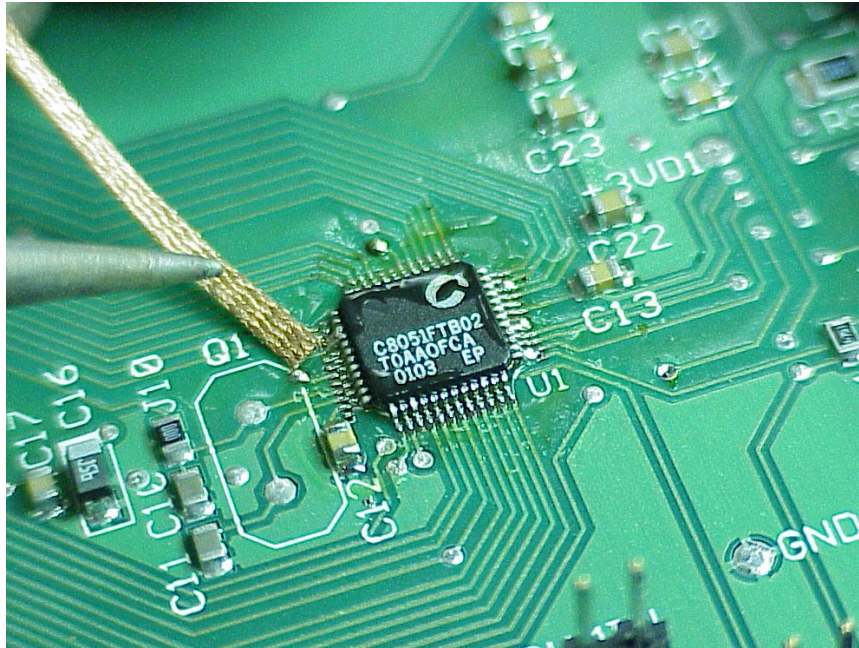


Figure 7. Apply flux; wick excess solder from pins

Next, strip off approximately 3 inches of insulation from a piece of the 30 gauge wire wrap wire. Cut the wire at a comfortable 12 inch length or so.

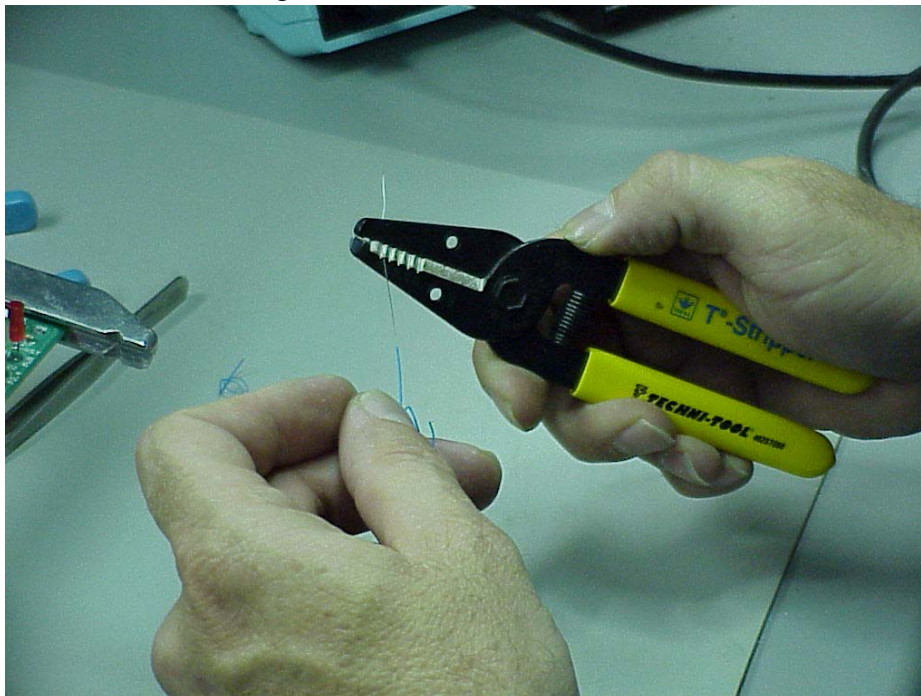


Figure 8. Wire stripping

Feed the wire behind and under the leads on one side of the IC as shown in Figure 9.

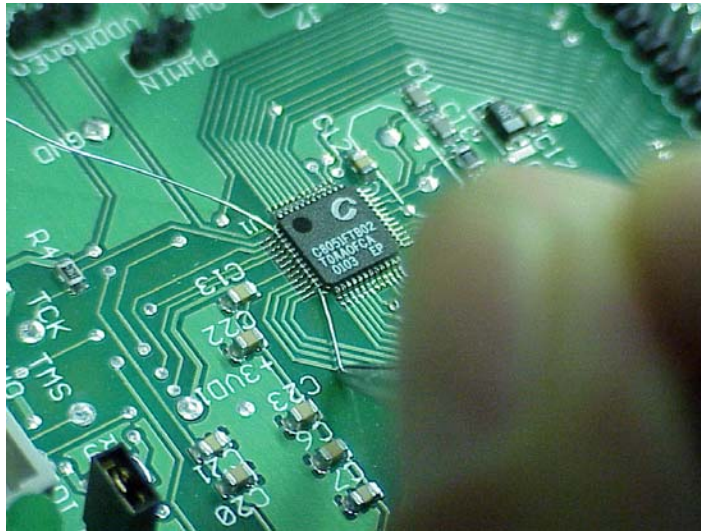


Figure 9. Feeding wire under QFP leads

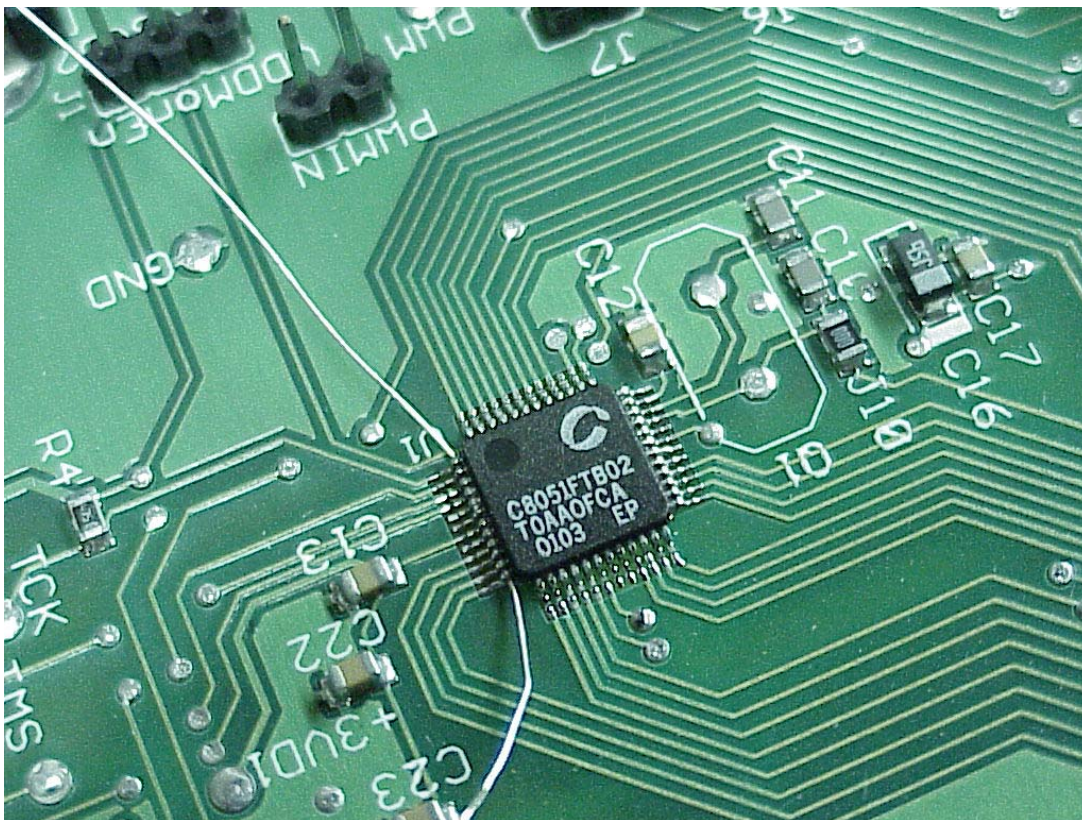


Figure 9. Wire with one side anchored to nearby component

Solder tack (anchor) one end of the 3 inch wire to a nearby via or component on the PCB. The anchor point should be in a location similar to that should in Figure 10.

Dispense a small amount of liquid flux across the leads.

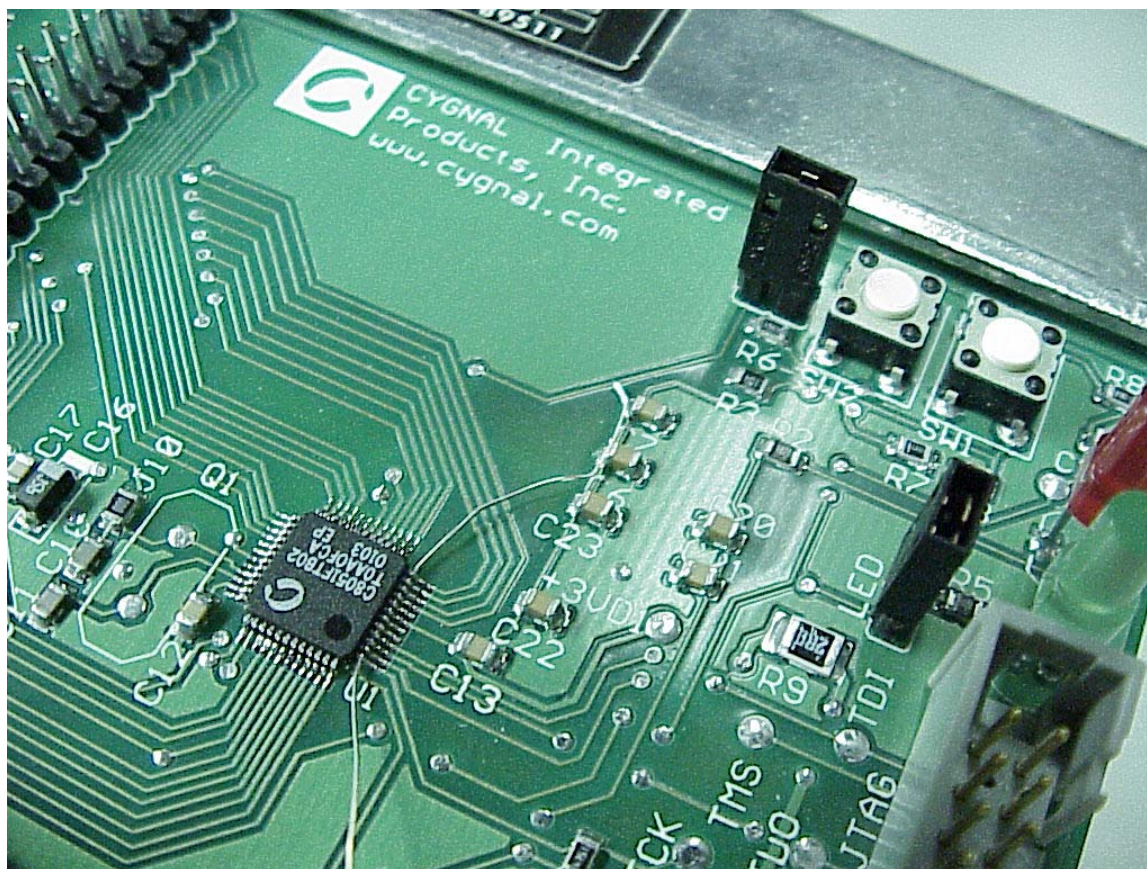


Figure 10. Bus wire is anchored on C6

Hold the loose (non-anchored) end of the wire with tweezers in close proximity to the device as shown in Figure 11.

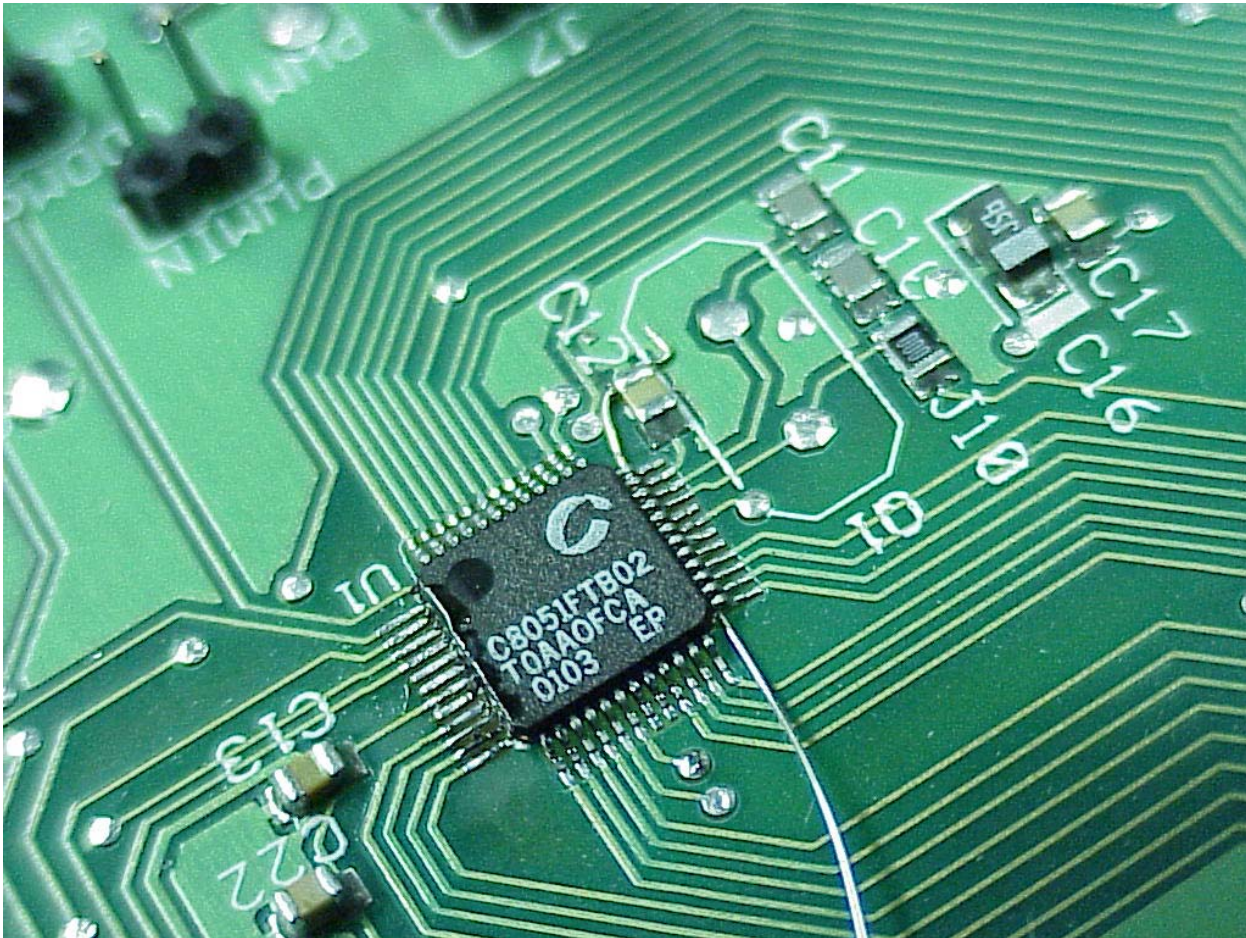


Figure 11. Side 2 anchored and ready for solder heat

You will now need to simultaneously apply solder heat and pull the wire away from the QFP, pulling at a slight upward angle from the board surface. Apply solder heat beginning at the lead closest to your tweezers. As the solder melts, gently pull the wire away from the QFP while continuing to move the solder heat from pin to pin to the right. You should not pull very hard. Pull as the solder melts. Do not leave the solder heat on any lead for more than necessary. The first lead will take the longest to heat, and after the wire gets hot, solder on the other leads will melt quickly. Excessive heat will damage the IC device and the PCB pad. The removal of 12 pins from a 48TQFP should take about 5 seconds total. Signs of excessive heat are:

- Melted plastic on the IC device
- PCB pads that lift off
- Brown scorch marks on the PCB

With one side of the QFP completed, repeat the same procedure on the other three sides of the QFP. Cut off the dirty part of the wire wrap wire or use a new piece for each side. Dispense flux again for each side.

Note that in the following pictures, the old IC device is not being saved. There is slightly more heat being applied here than necessary to speed up the process. This result is some melted plastic and missing gull-wing leads. These are visible in the pictures that follow. If you are trying to save the IC being removed, then you must be very careful to apply as little heat as possible during the removal process such that the QFP leads remain intact in the plastic QFP body. This will require some experimentation with solder heat settings and timing.

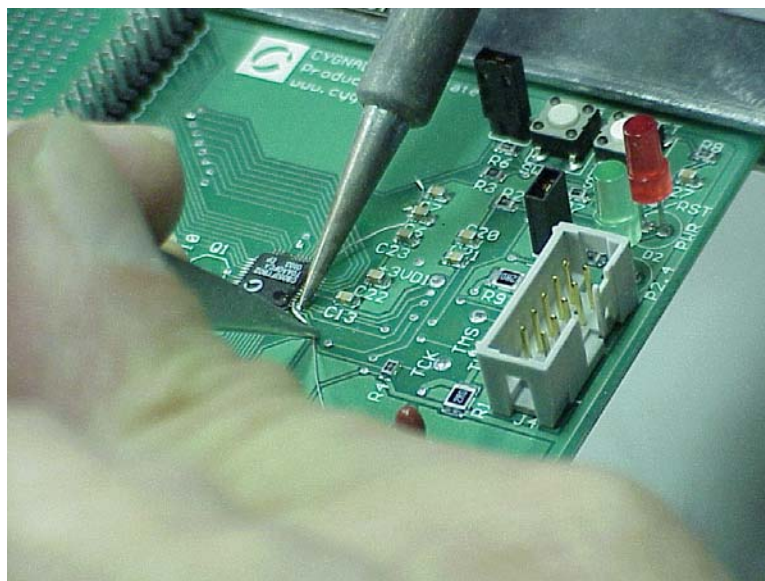


Figure 12. Hold tweezers close to device

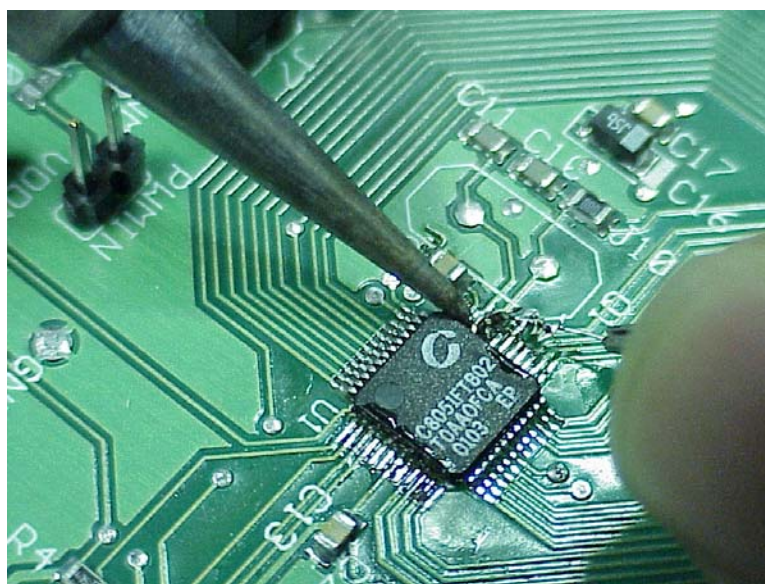


Figure 14. Side 2 almost complete

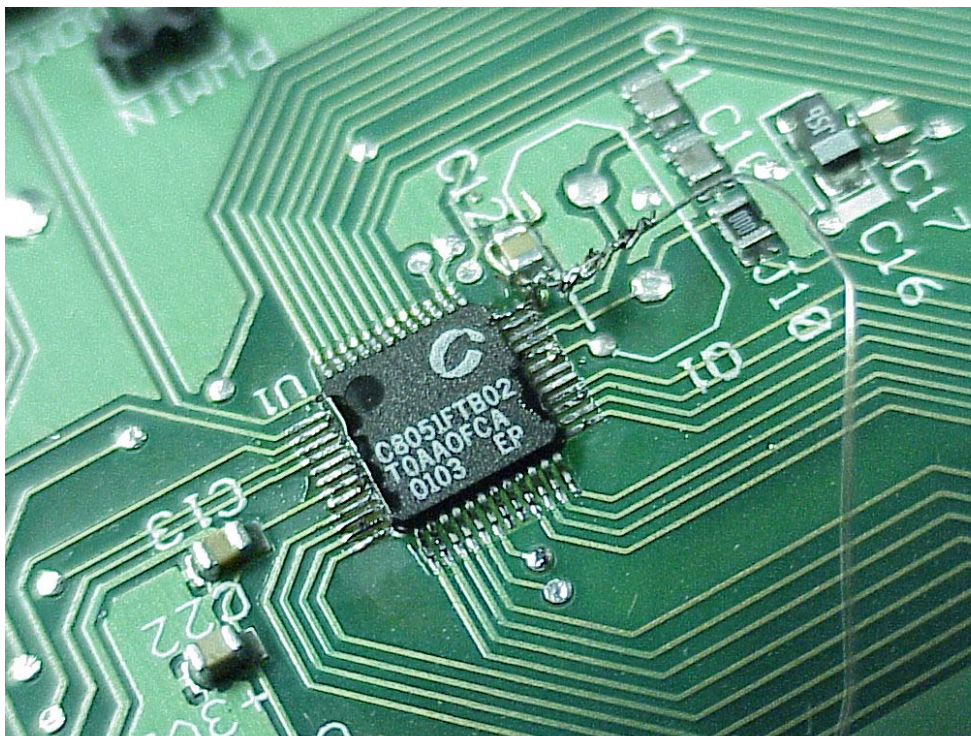


Figure 15. Side 2 is done

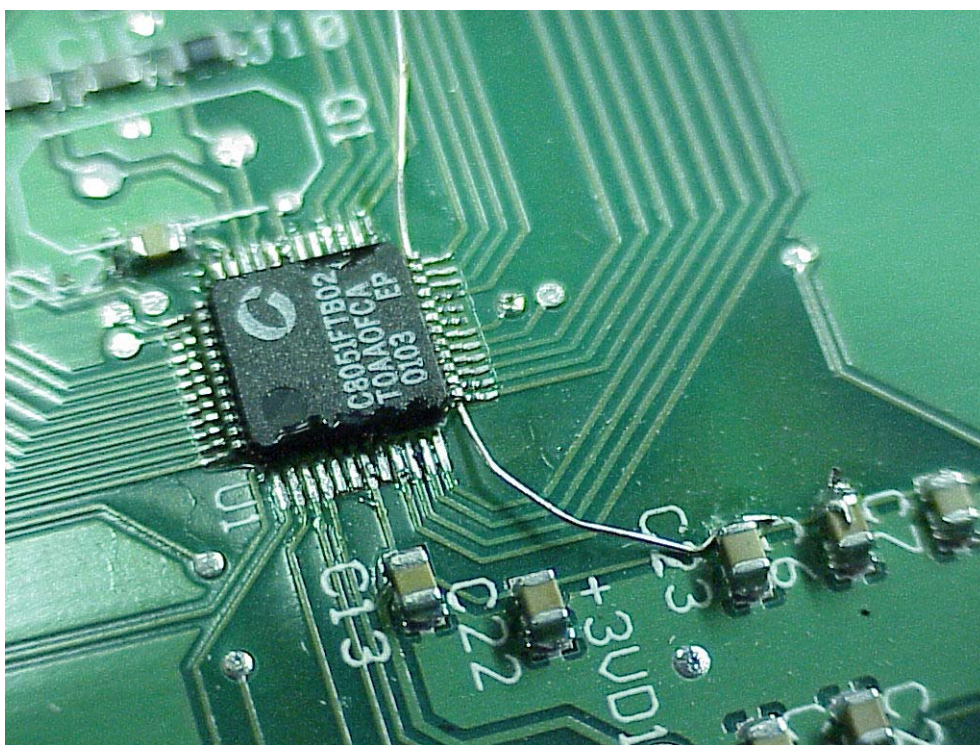


Figure 16. Side 3 anchored and ready

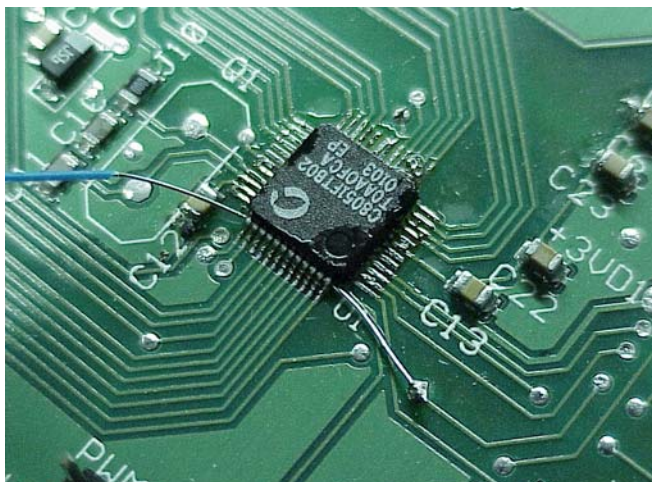


Figure 17. Side 4 anchored to a via

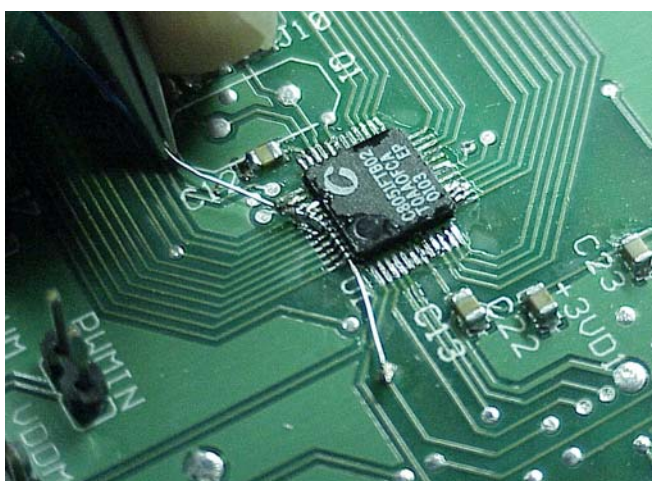


Figure 18. Side 4 removal started

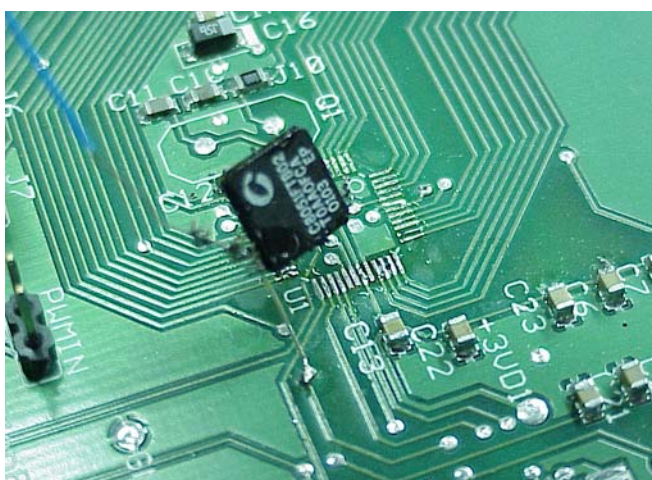


Figure 19. QFP removal a second before completion

B. Board Cleanup

New PCBs

For mounting a device to a new PCB, the amount of cleanup should be minimal. On a new PCB, there should be no solder on the pads. Brushing the pads with isopropyl alcohol (Figure 33) and drying the board should be enough preparation to begin the mounting procedure.

Reworked PCBs

The following section is the cleanup sequence that follows the QFP removal in the previous section. After removing the device, the solder pads will need cleanup. The idea is to clean the pads so that they are flat and free of solder and flux. Solder wick the pads until they are flat and dull. A clean pad appearance should be a dull silver color.

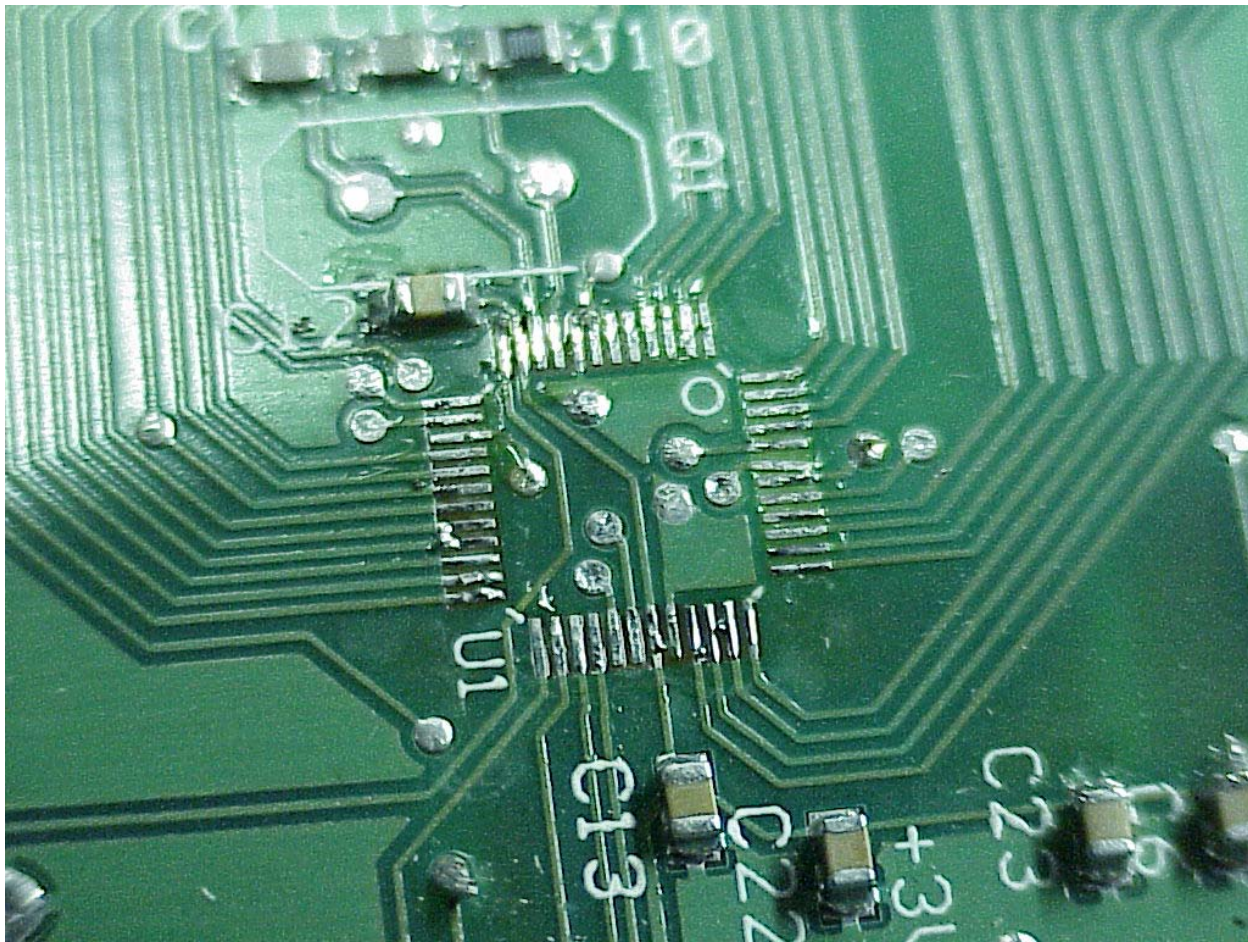


Figure 20. Pads after QFP removal procedure

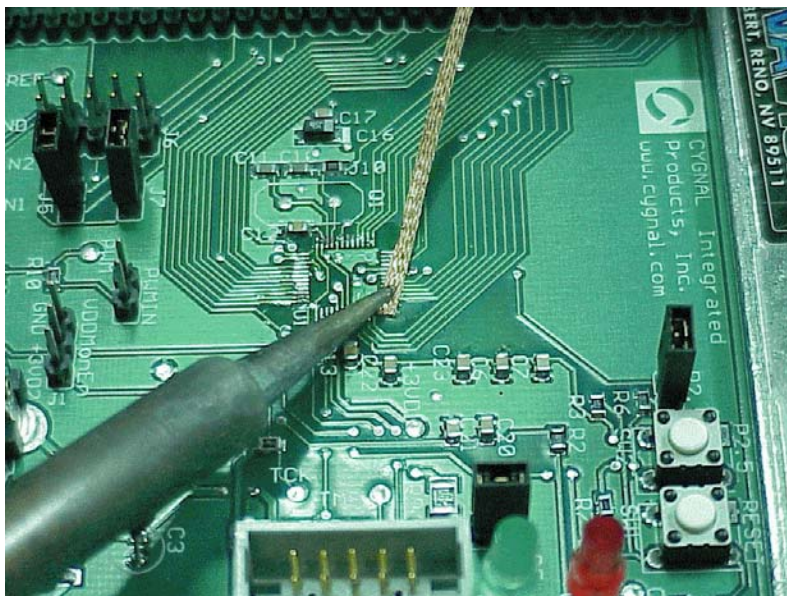


Figure 21. Solder wick to remove solder on the pads

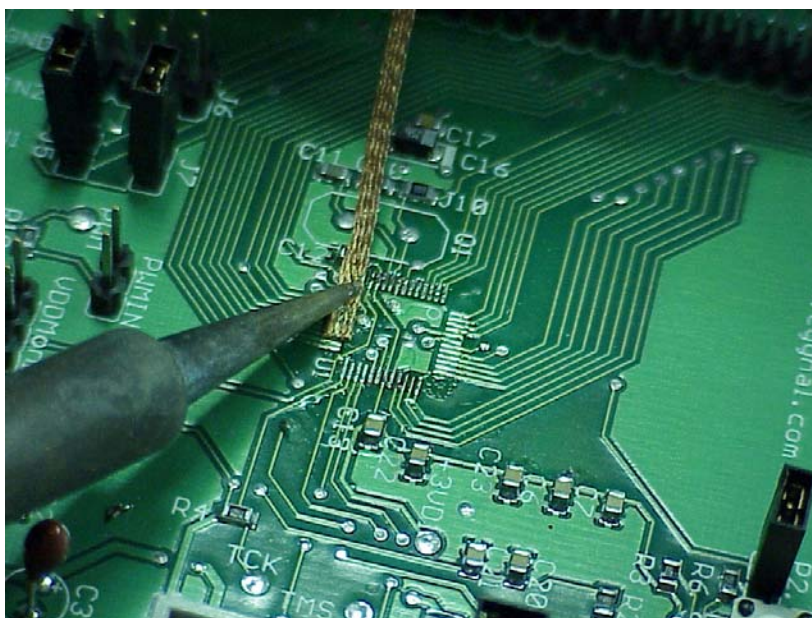


Figure 22. Repeat for all pads

If any pads become loose from the PCB, use a dental pick or other pointed object to re-align the pad (Figure 23 and Figure 24).

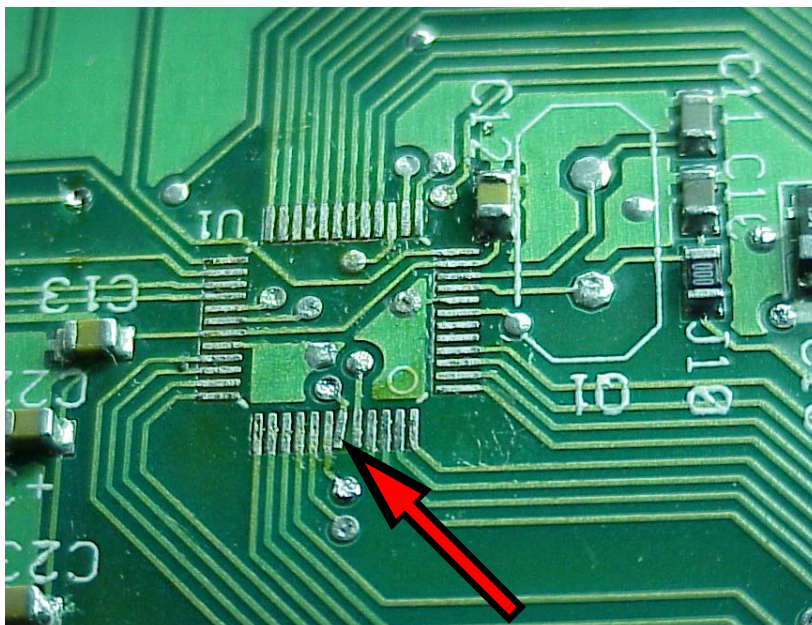


Figure 23. Clean pads but one pad is slightly crooked

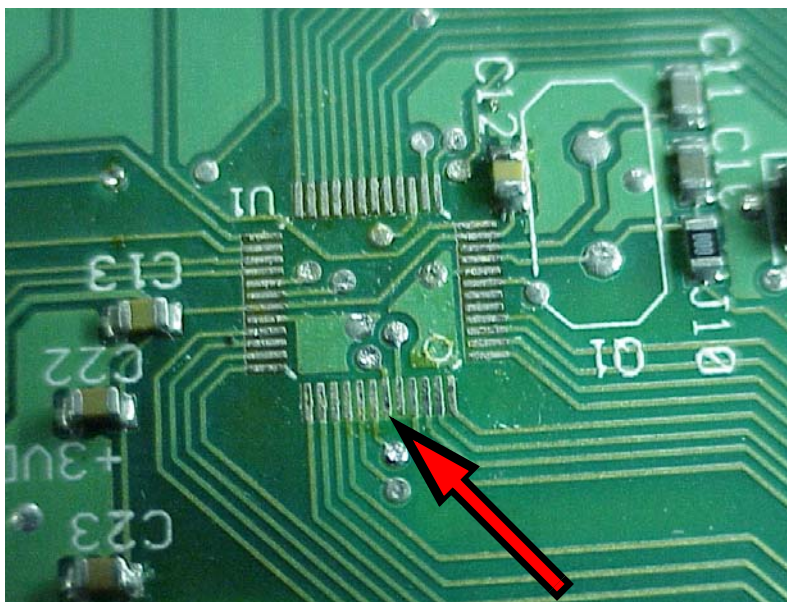


Figure 24. Pad straightened out

B. Soldering a new QFP

The pads on the PCB should be clean and free of any solder.

Carefully place the new QFP device on the PCB using tweezers or another safe method. Make sure the part is not dropped as the leads can be easily damaged.

Align the part over the pads using a small pick or similar tool to push the part. Get the alignment as accurate as you can. Also, make sure that the part is oriented correctly (pin 1 orientation).

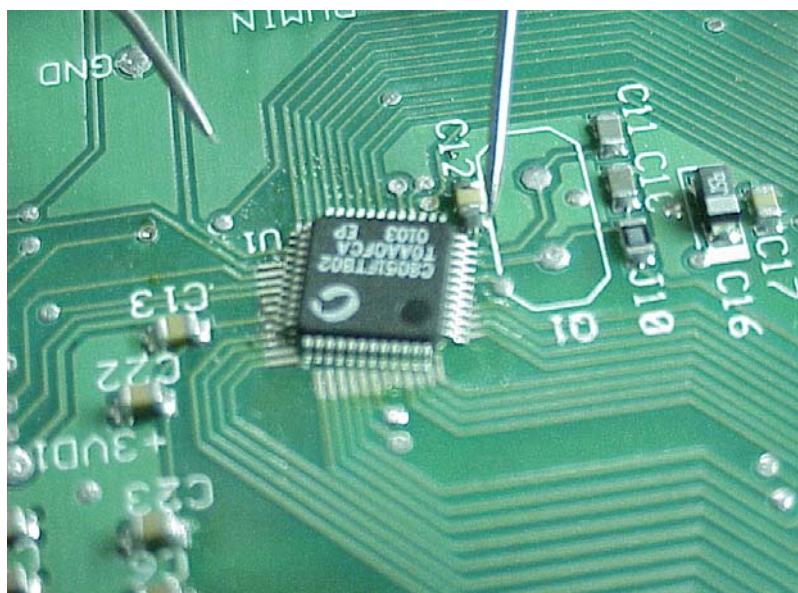


Figure 25. New QFP near pads, ready for alignment

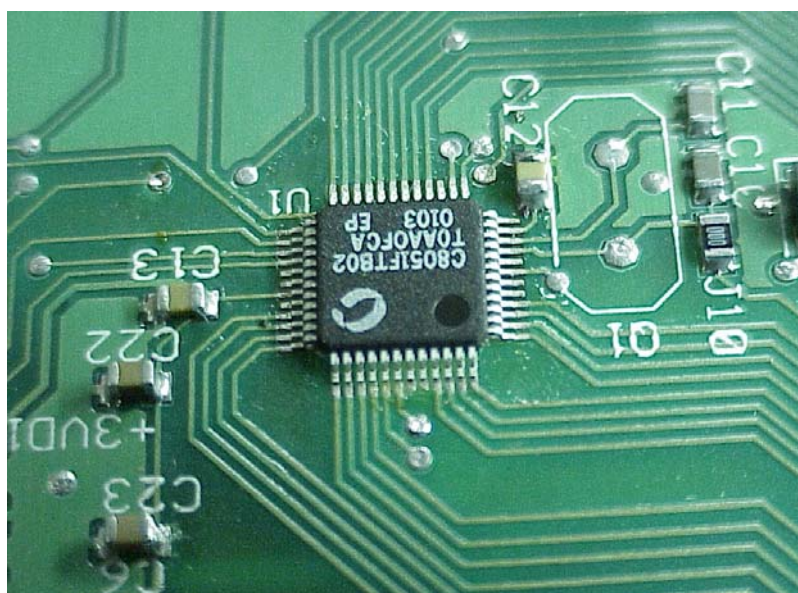


Figure 26. QFP aligned

Adjust the soldering station temperature to 725°F (385°C). Put a small amount of solder on the tip of the solder iron. While holding down the aligned QFP with a pick or other pointed tool, add a small amount of solder flux to the corner leads in two opposite corners. While still holding the part down with the pick, solder down two opposite corner leads on the QFP. Do not worry about excess solder or shorts between adjacent leads at this time. The idea is to anchor down the aligned QFP with solder so it does not move.

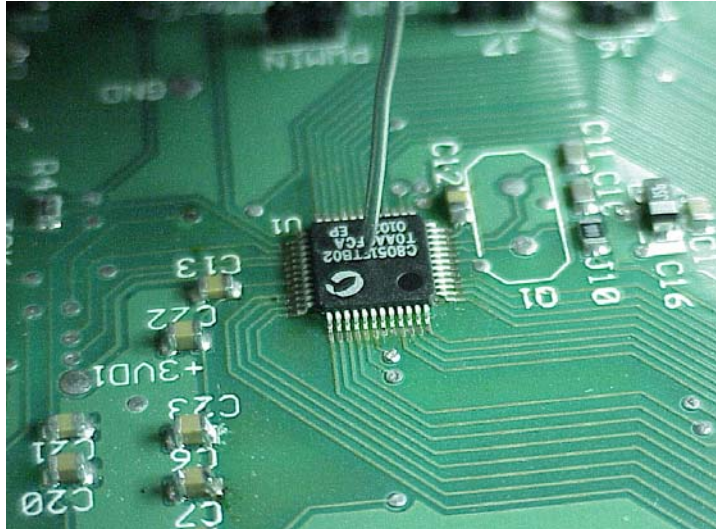


Figure 27. Aligned QFP ready for solder anchoring

Re-check the QFP alignment after soldering the corners. If necessary, make adjustments or remove and start over to get good QFP to PCB alignment.

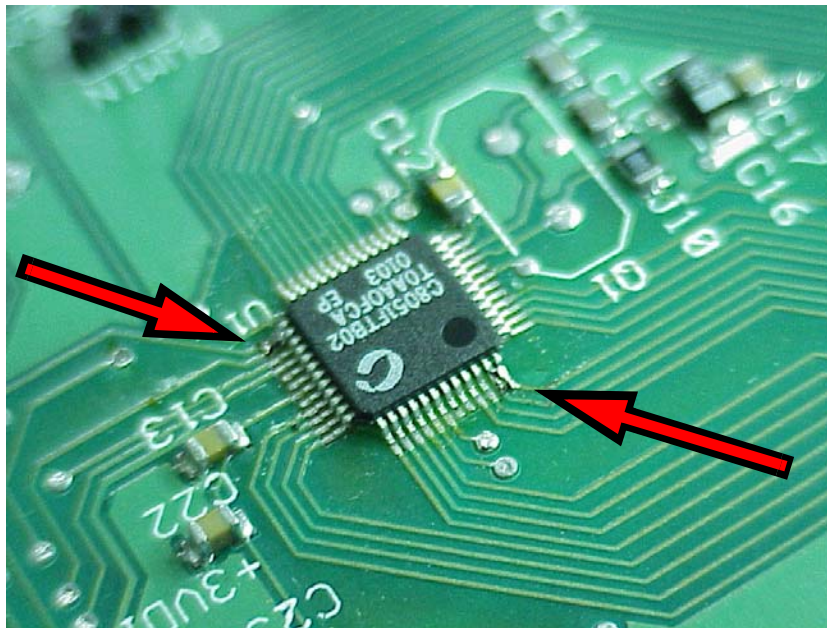


Figure 28. Aligned QFP with corners soldered down

Now you are ready to solder all the leads. Add solder to the tip of the soldering iron. Dispense flux over all the leads to keep them wet.

Touch the solder iron tip to the end of each QFP lead until the solder is seen running up the lead. Repeat for all the leads. Add small amounts of solder as needed to the soldering iron tip. Again, do not worry if you see some solder bridging as you will clean that up in the next step.

When soldering, keep the soldering iron tip parallel with the pins being soldered to prevent excessive solder shorts.

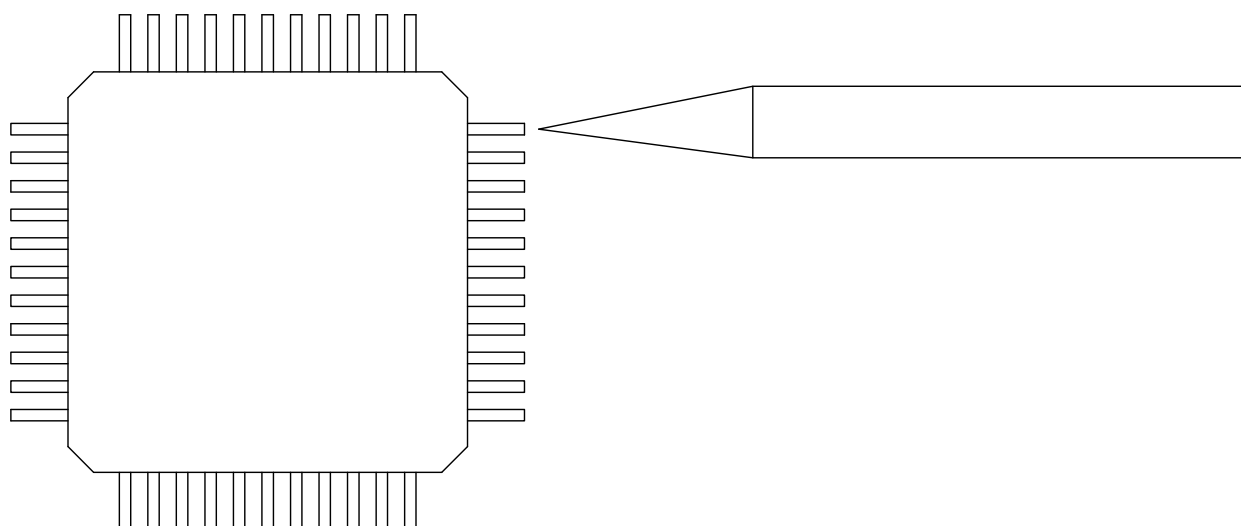


Figure 29. Keep iron tip parallel to pins being soldered

After soldering all the leads, wet all the leads with flux to enhance the solder wicking cleanup. Wick up solder where needed to eliminate any shorts/bridging.

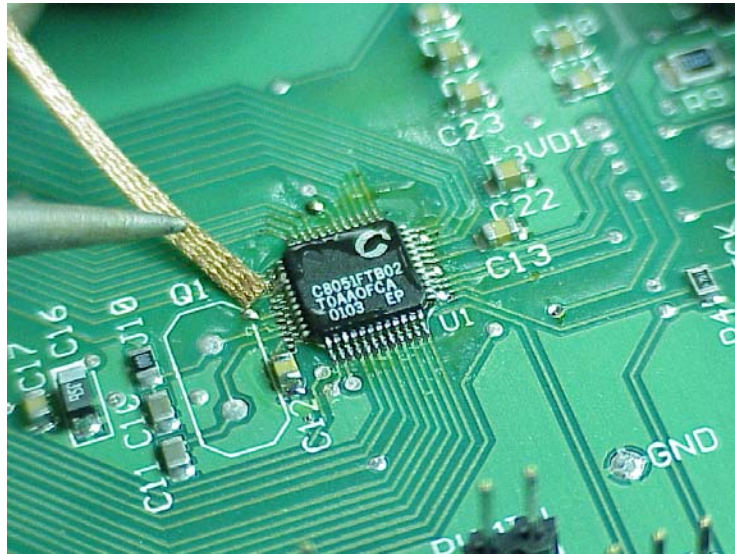


Figure 30. Wicking Solder #1

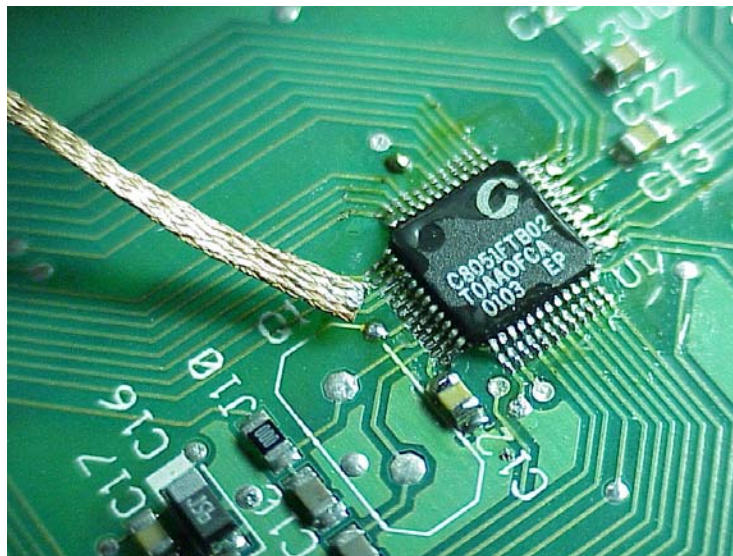


Figure 31. Wicking Solder #2

Hand inspect the board using 4X magnification (or higher) for shorts or marginal solder joints. Solder joints should have a smooth melt transition between each device pin and the PCB. Rework any pins as needed

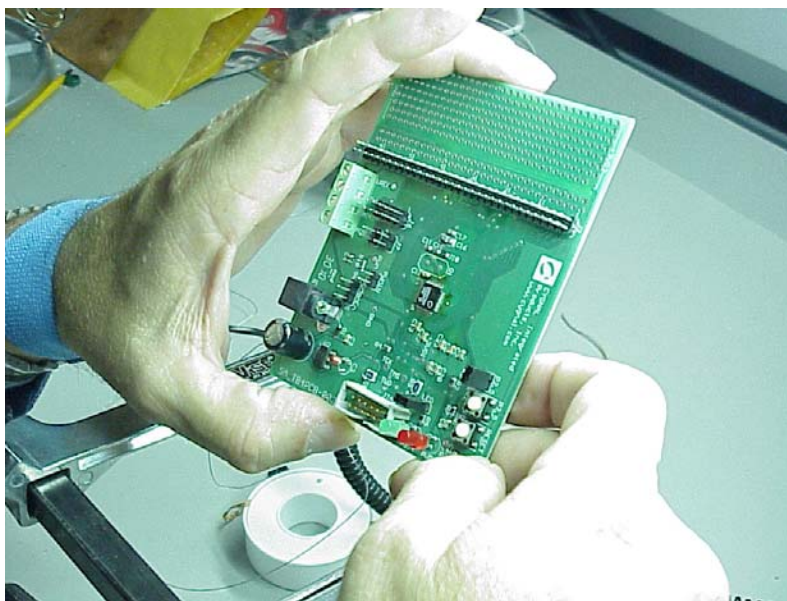
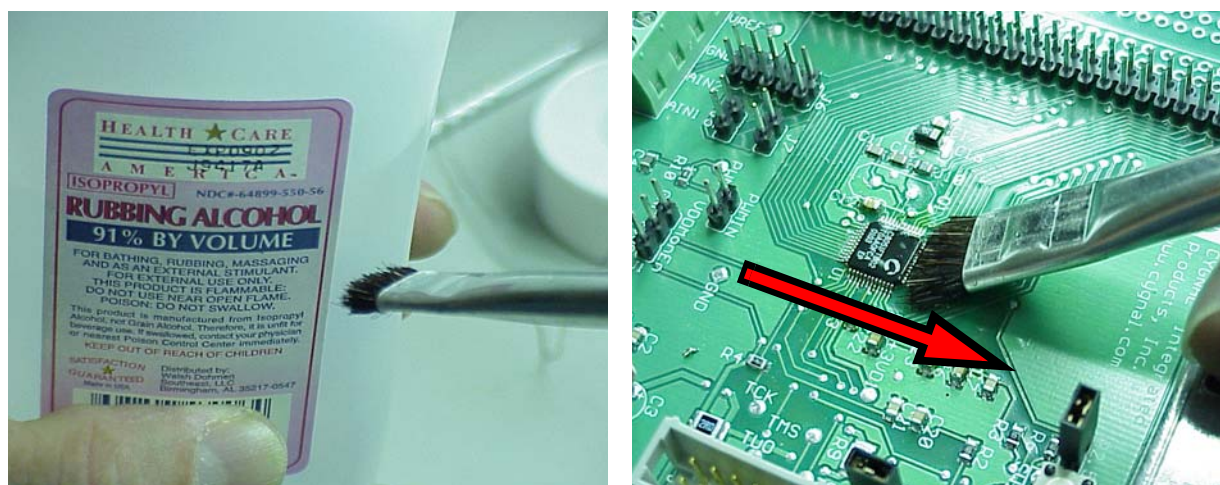


Figure 32. Visual Inspection

After the inspection passes, it is time to clean the flux off the board. Dip the stiff bristle brush into alcohol and wipe in the direction of the leads. Use moderate, but not excessive pressure. Use liberal amounts of alcohol and brush well between the QFP leads until the flux disappears.



**Figure 33. Isopropyl Alcohol and stiff brush used for cleanup.
Brush only in direction of leads**

Dry the board with compressed dry air or nitrogen. If this is not available, let the board dry for 30 minutes or more to let the alcohol evaporate under the QFP. The QFP leads should look bright and there should be no flux residue.

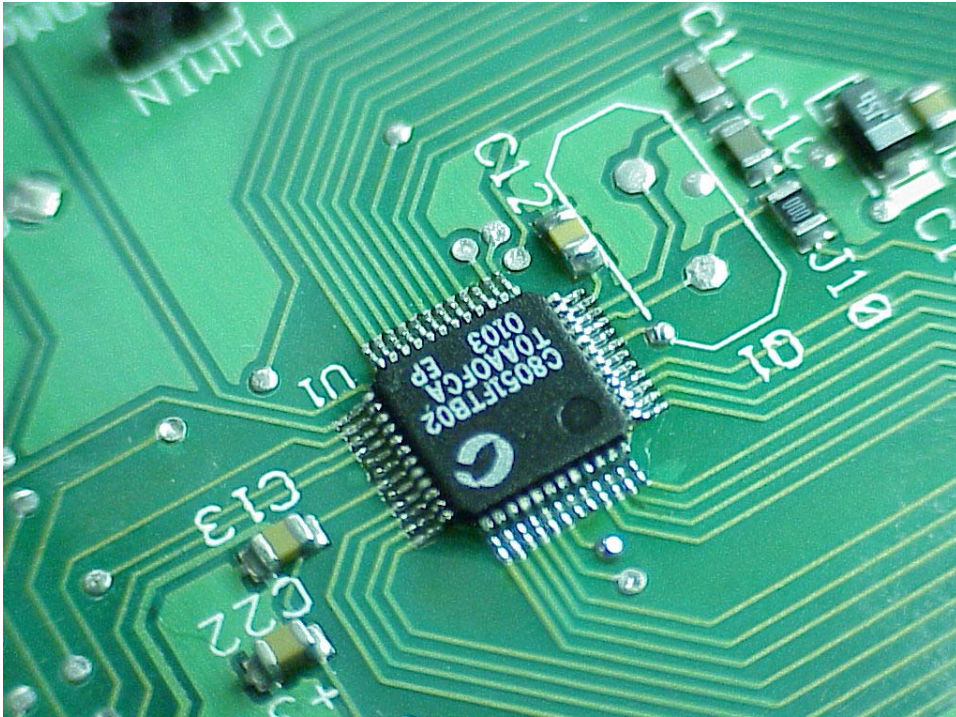


Figure 34. Clean and Pristine

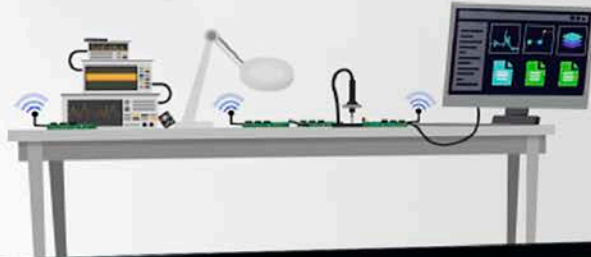
Re-inspect the board for workmanship. Rework any leads if needed.



Figure 35. Stereo zoom inspection station (7X to 40X magnification) helps to inspect solder joint workmanship

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